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Centennial Initiative News Release



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Centennial proposals eligible for matching funds

(Hawai'i National Park) – Implementing a Pilot Clean Energy Transportation System for Increased Visitor Experience; Engaging Volunteers in Interpretation, Hands-On Protection of Threatened and Endangered Species and Backcountry Patrol; and Linking Hawai'i's National Parks Through an Innovative Junior Ranger Program in Hawai'i Volcanoes National Park are three of 201 proposals National Park Service Director Mary Bomar and Secretary of the Interior Dirk Kempthorne announced at a press conference in Yosemite National Park today to celebrate the 91st anniversary of the NPS.

"The National Park Service has, after a rigorous review, certified these proposals as eligible for centennial challenge matching funds," Bomar said. "And they are ready to go in Fiscal Year 2008 which begins Oct. 1"

Said Park Superintendent Cindy Orlando, "Our centennial vision will position the park as a leader in sustainability, education and outreach through innovative partnerships and programs."

Hawai'i Volcanoes' three projects represent \$2,200,000 of nearly \$370 million of proposals eligible for centennial challenge matching funds. The projects include:

- Leading by example, the park will partner with the State of Hawai'i through the Hawai'i Hydrogen Capital Investment Fund to pilot a demonstration clean energy transportation system that tests innovative ways to conserve, harvest, and store energy without creating pollution. (\$1,800,000)
- The park will partner with Hawai'i Natural History Association and Friends of Hawai'i Volcanoes National Park to recruit a cadre of volunteers who represent the face of America, allowing underserved Americans to find value in parks. As Volunteers-in-Parks, they will help educate and inspire others, protect backcountry resources, and enable the recovery of native plants, Hawksbill turtles, and Hawaiian geese. (\$300,000)
- The park will partner with Hawai'i Natural History Association to develop an island-wide Junior Ranger Program that will connect children and their families with the unique natural and cultural resources of the island's four national parks. (\$100,000)

Director Bomar said, "The centennial challenge is a critical element in the National Park Centennial Initiative put forward by President Bush and unveiled by Secretary Kempthorne one year ago. The full centennial initiative is a potential \$3 billion investment in our national parks, two-thirds of it a public-private partnership of matching money."

The President's fiscal year 2008 budget called for an additional \$100 million a year for 10 years to be dedicated to bolster basic park operations, Bomar said. Congress has included the first \$100 million for operations in the fiscal year 2008 budget that awaits final passage.

"The second part of the initiative is the centennial challenge – a funding mechanism to match up to \$100 million a year over 10 years of public money with \$100 million a year for 10 years in private donations," Bomar said. "Congress has yet to finish legislation necessary to create the public-private centennial challenge."

Financial commitments to the first round of proposals exceeded the President's challenge. "We have about \$370 million in proposals with not \$100 million in private commitments but \$216 million committed from park visitors, friends groups and other partners," Bomar said.

"I've testified before Senate and House subcommittees and judging by the warm reception we received, I believe Congress will include centennial challenge money in our next budget. We look forward to working with members from both sides of the aisle to provide the key to the centennial challenge. When that happens we can make decisions on which of these wonderful proposals to begin in the fall."

"The State of Hawai'i, Friends of Hawai'i Volcanoes National Park, and Hawai'i Natural History Association have committed matching money for the projects. The new fiscal year begins Oct. 1 and we are excited to get these centennial projects underway," added Orlando.

The list of proposals – at 116 parks in 40 states and the District of Columbia – touches parks nationwide with a centennial effort to inventory every living thing in the national park system.

To be certified, proposals had to be imaginative and innovative, addressed critical Service needs, had a philanthropic partner, required little or no additional recurring operating funds to be sustainable, improved the efficiency of park management, operations and employees and produced measurable results.

"There is a huge wave of excitement among National Park Service professionals and our partners," Bomar said. "We will create park-based centers for Junior Rangers, implement cutting-edge energy projects like fuel cells and geothermal and build multimedia wayside exhibits that "talk" to visitors. This is a victory for national parks and over 270 million park visitors we see each year.

"Last week, I sent an email to the men and women of the National Park Service to inform them of our announcement. One of the replies I received says it best: 'This is thrilling! A win/win opportunity like we've never seen before. Thanks for the energy and vision for the NPS.'

"That thanks," Bomar said, "is for the many who worked to transform vision into action: Secretary Kempthorne and our friends in Congress, from both sides of the aisle who introduced legislation to support the Centennial. But most of all, our thanks go to park superintendents, friends groups, partners and an army of supporters."

"When history is written," Bomar said, "the Centennial Initiative will be second only to the creation of the national park system itself."

The full list of centennial challenge-eligible projects and programs is available on-line at the National Park Service centennial web site www.nps.gov/2016

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